

International Bulletin

Vol 2 · No 9

Published by INTERNEWS

May 9, 1975

"WE MUST GIVE SAIGON A NEW FACE"

After the PRG Takeover

"The U.S., our enemy, has been chased out of the country and the old regime overthrown. Now we must give the capital a new face at all levels—social, economic, and educational—and render it worthy of its new name, Ho Chi Minh City." That is how the Provisional Revolutionary Government described the tasks it has set for the South Vietnamese capital in the founding issue of the daily *Liberation*, printed in Saigon. On May 7, one week after the new government took power, a huge rally held to celebrate the victory heard Gen. Tran Van Tra proclaim a general amnesty for all who worked for the old regime and call on the entire population to join in national reconstruction. "We have struggled for 30 years to arrive at this day," he said. The process of reorganizing South Vietnamese society had already begun.

Among the first orders issued by the new government was the outlawing of prostitution and the closing of opium dens, bars, striptease joints, massage parlors and other pleasure houses that mushroomed during the U.S. presence. A massive clean-up campaign was launched within a few days of the PRG takeover. The French news agency AFP reported May 5 that "Saigon inhabitants are scraping walls and cleaning up streets and market places and carting away rubbish. Old cinema posters are being



photo/Vietnam News Agency

Victorious Liberation Army troops in Da Nang, taken by the PRG one month before the fall of Saigon.

torn down as well as posters showing leaders of the ousted Thieu regime, which are replaced by new revolutionary slogans."

The PRG's Liberation Radio announced that Saigon is being
[continued on page 4]

THE NIXON-KISSINGER STRATEGY

Down the Drain in Six Weeks

The final contours of U.S. policy in Vietnam were filled out the day that policy met complete defeat. As the Provisional Revolutionary Government took power in Saigon, a former aide to Nguyen Van Thieu, Nguyen Tien Hung, held a press conference in Washington to release copies of two letters from Richard Nixon assuring Thieu that the U.S. would re-intervene militarily if North Vietnam launched an offensive. The press conference followed a month of charges that Nixon had made secret commitments to Thieu to obtain his signature on the Paris peace agreement—including charges made by Thieu himself in his resignation speech April 21. In the first letter, dated Nov. 14, 1972, Nixon promised Thieu: "You have my absolute assurance that if Hanoi fails to abide by the terms of this agreement it is my intention to take swift and severe retaliatory action."

Nixon reassured Thieu on Jan 5, after the Christmas bombing of Hanoi, that the U.S. would "respond with full force" if North Vietnam violated the agreement, and said he believed the problem of North Vietnamese troops being allowed to remain in the south is "manageable" under the agreement—implying that the threat of renewed U.S. bombing would prevent a major offensive. Thieu had objected that the agreement did not demand the removal of northern troops. But Nixon threatened Thieu that the U.S. would go it alone and sign the accords and that Congress would cut all military and economic aid to Saigon if he refused to sign.

The promise of retaliatory action and the threat of an aid cut-off produced Thieu's signature. But similar U.S. pressure was never brought against Thieu to force him to implement the political provisions of the accord. The tone of the Nixon letters and Thieu's resignation speech—in which he voiced his continued opposition to the main provisions of the Paris agreement—indicate that Nixon and Kissinger had never expected the agreement to be implemented or the war to end. Their intention, it seems, was to obtain the withdrawal of all U.S. troops and the release of the POWs while continuing the Nixon war strategy of "Vietnamization."

Vietnamization had been described by Nixon in 1967 as a plan to turn over all of the fighting to Saigon, including air support, while eventually withdrawing all U.S. troops and air-power. But from the first days of the new administration in January 1969, Nixon and Kissinger knew that Vietnamization alone would never work. Their secret study of the war, NSSM-1, compiled by Daniel Ellsberg from reports by all the concerned military and civilian agencies, concluded that the Saigon army "could not now or in the foreseeable future stand up to current North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces."

While Nixon and Kissinger slowly withdrew U.S. troops and built up the Saigon army, they carried out a series of escalations designed both to strengthen the relative position of the Saigon and U.S. forces, and to warn North Vietnam of greater

[continued on page 8]

U.S. INVESTMENT IN VIETNAM

The Bonanza Never Materialized

Ever since Pres. Eisenhower made his famous domino-theory speech in 1953, in which he referred to the tungsten, tin and other riches of Southeast Asia as the reason for the U.S. presence in that part of the world, critics of the Vietnam war have wondered to what extent the war was being fought to make South Vietnam a haven for U.S. business. There are still many unanswered questions about U.S. involvement in Vietnam, but as 30 years of U.S. intervention have come to an end, one thing is clear: the investment bonanza by U.S. corporations never materialized. U.S. investment in South Vietnam amounted to a mere \$60 million out of a U.S. world-wide total of over \$100,000 million.

At one time, U.S. government officials had big plans for developing South Vietnam under the aegis of the multinational corporations. Perhaps the best known study was the Lilienthal Report, commissioned by President Johnson in 1966 and completed in 1969. This report, as well as others undertaken for the CIA, the RAND Corporation, and the Asian Development Bank, concluded that the war had enhanced South Vietnam's "economic growth potential" by providing an infrastructure ranking among the best of the developing countries. The U.S. had constructed thousands of miles of good roads, deep water ports, power stations and telecommunications systems. The big U.S. bases, such as Cam Ranh Bay, it was believed, could easily be turned into industrial parks where U.S. corporations could utilize cheap South Vietnamese labor. In addition, the country has fertile land, abundant forests and a skilled labor force of hundreds of thousands who had worked for the U.S. military and construction firms. With the added ingredients of U.S. aid and economic reforms to attract foreign capital, the planners concluded, the economy was "poised for takeoff" in the 1970s.

But all these postwar development studies were based on one crucial assumption—that the war would end with a clear-cut U.S. victory—or, at the least, that it would "wind down," with the other side reverting to sporadic guerrilla warfare, leaving the Thieu administration firmly in power.

After the signing of the Paris peace agreement, the Thieu and Nixon administrations tried to attract massive foreign investment. In December 1972 Thieu enacted a series of laws which the *Journal of Commerce* described as "probably the

most liberal investment laws of any developing country in the world." Among the measures were a 100 percent tax holiday for five years or more, no restrictions on taking profits out of the country, the allowing of 100 percent foreign ownership of enterprises, and even the financing of more than half of plant costs through an industrial development bank. Thieu also outlawed labor strikes and carried out repression against labor and union leaders.

Despite these lucrative opportunities, the multinational corporations, which had generally supported Nixon's Vietnamization program, were more circumspect about laying out their own dollars for investment in Thieu's South Vietnam. The reason was the instability of the Thieu regime. As one businessman told *Business Week* in early 1973, "Why should we go into Vietnam, where the chances of Thieu's survival are fifty-fifty when we can go into Indonesia where the chances are ninety-ten?"

At first there was a lot of talk about possible big investments: American Motors and Ford were considering assembly plants for utility vehicles, Hyatt House and Hilton were considering building 20-story hotels, and Pepsi Cola was considering a bottling plant in a joint venture with the wife of Saigon's former head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. But none of the plans materialized. In late 1974, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, "foreign investment remained largely a pipe dream." As one American businessman in Saigon told the *Wall Street Journal*,

"In most Asian countries foreign businessmen cry all the way to the bank. In Vietnam, they cry all the way to the airport."

One exception to this general picture was oil investment. Oil companies had suspected that the South China Sea off the coast of South Vietnam contained oil deposits, but in May 1974 several U.S. oil companies were awarded oil exploration leases by Saigon on terms much more favorable to the oil companies than in other oil-producing countries. By September, Mobil made what it called an "encouraging find," and Mobil, Shell and other companies paid a total of \$100 million to the Saigon regime for oil lease rights. But, as Saigon was about to collapse, Shell and Mobil abruptly pulled their two drilling platforms out of the South China Sea. "It's a shame," said the vice-president of Global Marine. "It looks like that part of the world will become the world's next oil-producing province." Now it appears that the new South Vietnamese government will be able to exploit these oil finds, contributing to postwar reconstruction. And it will know where to drill, thanks to the American oil companies' initial efforts.

Since the Socialist countries do not have highly developed off-shore drilling technology, the new Revolutionary Government has indicated a desire to renegotiate oil leases—on new terms—with western oil companies. The two most likely contenders at present are the Italian state-owned ENI group, which has almost completed negotiations for an exploration lease in North Vietnamese waters, and a French oil company.

In the end, the corporations proved quite astute. A peaceful South Vietnam under the PRG will not provide economic conditions which allow foreign business to recoup their entire investment in three years, as is possible in Asian countries which still have governments that rely on U.S. military support to stay in power. Last year, the PRG issued a statement on South Vietnam's natural resources which made it clear that any leases or investment rights issued by the Thieu regime would be considered illegal by them. The corporations' reluctance to invest is eloquent testimony to the fact that top U.S. business leaders did not believe Kissinger's bland assurances that peace was at hand and that the Thieu regime would survive any more than did the antiwar movement.



Microwave communication center at Vung Tau: part of infrastructure left behind by U.S.

PHOENIX AGENTS SETTLING IN U.S.

The Chickens Come Home to Roost

Under the rubric of humanitarian relief, the Ford administration has mounted a massive air- and sealift of Vietnamese, including those who were so closely identified with the U.S. presence in Saigon that the State Department feels that they would have been exposed to "high risk" if they had remained in their country. Although there have been no signs of the bloodbath from which these refugees are ostensibly escaping, the administration argues, in effect, that the escape has prevented reprisals which otherwise would have been a certainty.

President Ford has stressed that of the 120,000 refugees being processed for admission into the United States, some 60 percent are children and only 30,000 to 35,000 are heads of household who will compete for jobs in the present high-unemployment recession.

But the political effects of the refugee absorption may be much greater than the consequences on the job market. An official of the Agency for International Development quoted in the *San Francisco Examiner* May 4 estimated that about 5,000 of the "high-risk" refugees are former operatives of the CIA-sponsored Phoenix program—which carried out a real bloodbath in South Vietnam in the late sixties and early seventies.

Wayne Cooper, a foreign service officer who served as a Phoenix adviser for 18 months, described it as a "unilateral American program." Writing in the *Washington Post* in June 1972, Cooper reported, "CIA representatives recruited, organized, supplied and directly paid CT [Counter-Terror] teams, whose function was to use terror—assassination, ambushes, kidnapings and intimidation—against the Viet Cong leadership."

An expert on the Phoenix program, counterinsurgency critic Michael Klare, author of *War Without End*, characterized the Phoenix operatives as "assassins and professional torturers." Klare told Internews, "Most of the people who were involved in the murders and tortures were criminals who were rounded up from the prisons of South Vietnam—bully's, underworld figures, and thugs, who were given a uniform and so many piastres a month to go out and do murdering for the CIA."

"When the program was under direct U.S. supervision," Klare continued, "26,369 people were murdered by Phoenix operatives and another 33,358 were imprisoned—and in the situation in Vietnam at the time, that meant automatic torture." Klare stressed that despite the



Saigon police 1974: Now at Camp Pendleton?

program's official objective—elimination of the infrastructure of the National Liberation Front—the terror came to be applied indiscriminately to other dissidents, including students, Buddhists, and Third Force neutralists. Klare added that though U.S. sponsorship ended officially with the signing of the Paris Accords in 1973, the program continued—renamed "Operation F6"—and took another 40,000 lives, according to Saigon figures. He told Internews there was "considerable evidence" of continuing covert links to the CIA after 1973, through financing and advisory involvement.

It will be difficult to investigate the links between the CIA and the Vietnamese receiving political asylum in the United States, for many of the refugees with high-placed friends are arriving with whole new identities. CBS correspondent Bruce Dunning reported from Guam May 3 that the men in dark glasses he was watching at the gate of the immigration processing area were "once some of the most powerful and most feared men in Saigon." All were going under pseudonyms and receiving escorted VIP treatment, rushed ahead of other evacuees who had been in line for hours. One was once Saigon's police chief; two others headed secret political police units—one in charge of investigating "Vietcong political activity," the other spying on opposition politicians.

Some critics of the CIA's preferred refugees point to the regularity with which the murky world of cloak-and-dagger intelligence operatives overlaps with narcotics trafficking, organized crime, and the political far right. They fear that the anticommunist exodus from Vietnam may have an impact similar to that of the anti-Castro Cubans who have made Miami the drug-smuggling capital of the United States, a base camp for covert operations from the Bay of Pigs to the Watergate burglary—with some of the

same principals leading both actions—and the main domestic financial center for laundering illegal campaign contributions.

In a post-Watergate study of the anti-Castro refugees, writer Horace Sutton concluded, "The very circumstances that drove the Miami Cubans to emigrate welded them into a fierce anti-Communist force, eager to perform any service, go to any length, undertake any mission that would strike a blow against international communism." Besides the role of a minority of the Cuban émigrés as street ruffians, *agents provocateurs* and Watergate burglars, the majority of Miami's 300,000 Cubans—a quarter of the city's population—as naturalized citizens are a solid voting bloc of extreme right-wingers.

The State Department has denied that it plans to concentrate Vietnamese refugees to the degree that Cubans were concentrated in Miami, but so far the administration has been vague about its plans to "spread out" the refugee population. The suspicion is that most will end up in California—despite protests from the governor and the state secretary of health and welfare, who cabled Secretary of State Kissinger that a massive influx of refugees will seriously aggravate California's unemployment crisis (tops in the nation, with nearly a million unemployed) and add to the 2.4 million already receiving some form of medical or welfare assistance in the state.

In one crucial respect, a concentration of right-wing Vietnamese around San Francisco would differ sharply from the Cuban impact on Miami. While the anti-Castro Cubans blended easily with the established communities of Miami, the ex-Phoenix agents may be settling in areas known for some of the most vocal criticism of their patrons in Saigon—and the scenario for confrontation is not hard to imagine.

In the fifties, the French intelligence community brought their most compromised Vietnamese collaborators to Paris when French troops withdrew from Indochina, and these experienced assassins came to play an important part in the violent unofficial repression of those who supported Algerian independence when the next colonial war unfolded. Even if the ex-Phoenix agents refrain from violence when resettled in the United States, their political presence can only strengthen the very forces which fostered America's debacle in Indochina in the first place.

What is the P.R.G.?

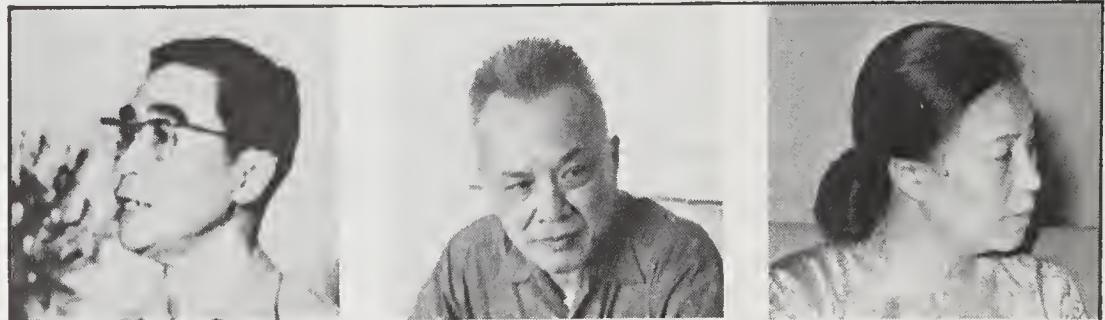
The Provisional Revolutionary Government, which took control of all of South Vietnam on May 1, was formed six years ago on June 10, 1969. Since then, the PRG has administered zones throughout South Vietnam—at the same time organizing committees in urban areas and carrying out massive political struggle in areas controlled by the Saigon government. Before the current offensive, which brought it to full power, the PRG was recognized by over 40 countries as the only legal government of South Vietnam.

The PRG was founded as a result of elections held throughout South Vietnam, including areas nominally under control of the Saigon regime. The elections were sponsored jointly by the National Liberation Front (NLF) and the Alliance of National, Democratic and Peace Forces—an organization of urban intellectuals formed following the 1968 Tet offensive. The election took place entirely outside the framework of the Saigon regime, but it was a major event throughout the country. In December 1968—a few months before the PRG was formed—a correspondent for the French paper *Le Monde* reported that “everyone is talking about revolutionary committees, alliances, fronts, and elections. . . . Within a few months the country has been crisscrossed, the movement is so widespread that confusion can already be read on the faces of those charged with stemming it.”

The PRG is a coalition made up of members of the NLF and the Alliance of National, Democratic and Peace Forces.

Takeover *[continued from page 1]*
 run by an 11-member military management committee, headed by Gen. Tran Van Tra, one of the PRG's best known generals. A legend in Saigon, Gen. Tra led the Tet offensive in the Saigon region and later served as head of the PRG delegation to the joint military commission in Saigon. People's Revolutionary Committees have been set up in various districts of the city to normalize life and implement the new order.

Immediately after taking power, the PRG announced the abolition of the old regime and began disbanding and disarming former soldiers and police. Former officials, including police and secret police, were given until the end of May to report to the new authorities. Those who fail to do so, and those who work to defeat the new government, will be severely punished, says Liberation Radio.



HUYNH TAN PHAT (left): President of the PRG. Long-time revolutionary, beginning as a student during the Japanese occupation of Vietnam. He participated in the general insurrection in Saigon in August 1945 and was arrested after the French retook the city. In 1949, he went to the Viet Minh zones, returning to Saigon after the signing of the Geneva Accords. In 1959 he left again to head the Democratic party and become a vice president of the NLF.

NGUYEN HUU THO (center): Chairman of the advisory council of the PRG. Lawyer, a famous French-educated Saigon intellectual. Helped organize the first anti-U.S. demonstration in

Saigon in 1950 against a visiting U.S. naval unit. Leader of the Saigon-Cholon Peace Movement in 1954, formed to press for implementation of the Geneva Accords. Arrested, escaped from prison in 1961. Elected chairman of the NLF. **NGUYEN THI BINH** (right): Foreign Minister of the PRG. From a famous revolutionary family, she began her own activities as a student in the late '40s, and was one of the leaders of the student movement in Saigon. Jailed in 1951 by the French, released after the Geneva Accords were signed. Was elected to the central committee of the NLF and became vice president of the Liberation Women's Union.

It has popularly elected People's Revolutionary councils at all levels from central to village, which in turn appoint People's Revolutionary Committees to carry out the tasks of government.

During the past six years, the PRG has run schools and colleges, conducted literacy campaigns, and provided adult education. In the jungles, it set up hospitals and schools for training medical and health workers—often literally underground. The PRG reduced land rents, distributed land to poor peasants and assisted in the formation of mutual aid teams among farmers.

The roots of the PRG go back to the National Liberation Front, formed in the

South in 1960, and beyond that to the Viet Minh, which led the resistance to French colonial rule in Vietnam. Long before the PRG was formed, the NLF was carrying out many of the normal functions of a government in the domestic and foreign fields. “The insurrection is Southern-rooted,” Vietnam scholars George Kahin and John Lewis wrote in 1967 in their widely cited book, *The United States in Vietnam*. “It arose at Southern initiative in response to Southern demand. The Liberation Front gave political articulation and leadership to the widespread reaction against the harshness and heavy-handedness of Diem's government.”

In what may be a pattern for the Saigon area, the PRG authorities in Da Nang told AP correspondent Daniel De Luce that 103,000 enlisted men and non coms captured in March have been released, and that 6,000 officers are being held for re-education.

The new government dissolved all political parties, labor unions and other organizations and publications which existed under the Thieu regime. The *New York Times* reported May 3 that the headquarters of the Vietnamese Confederation of Labor was seized by 3,000 workers. The paper quoted Liberation Radio as saying that a revolutionary trade union organization was being formed and that all members of the old labor Confederation were ordered to report to the new authorities. Confederation head Tran Quoc Buu—suspected by the PRG of having worked with French intelligence and the CIA—was reportedly branded a traitor.

There have been conflicting reports about the nationalization of businesses. All property of the deposed regime has officially been confiscated. Some reports say that U.S. enterprises in the Saigon area, as well as big industrial, commercial, and agricultural enterprises and banks were nationalized. Other reports quote the new government as saying that commercial and industrial enterprises “serving the national economic life” would be authorized to retain their property and continue operating.

One of the most tangible changes has been the release of political prisoners throughout South Vietnam. Estimates of the number of political detainees held by the Thieu regime run to over 200,000. The PRG announced that on April 30, prisoners held on Con Son island, site of the infamous tiger cages, rose up together with local people and PRG forces to free themselves. Similar scenes were repeated

War Against the People

"Defenseless villagers are bombarded from the air, the inhabitants driven out into the countryside, the cattle machine-gunned, the huts set afire with incendiary bullets: this is called pacification." The words are George Orwell's, written in 1946—a startling if unconscious vision of the U.S. war in Vietnam two decades later. "Pacification"—control of the civilian population—was the name of the game in Vietnam, and to achieve that goal the U.S. waged one of the costliest and most brutal wars in history.

The U.S. dropped 3.1 million tons of bombs on South Vietnam alone—twice what was dropped on Nazi Germany, 20 times that dropped on Japan during WW II. The city of Quang Tri, captured by the PRG in their 1972 spring offensive, received what was probably the highest concentration of bombs in the history of warfare: during a 40-day period, the equivalent of four Hiroshima-size atomic bombs were dropped on the five-square-mile city.

According to U.S. government estimates, between 6.5 and 8.5 million South Vietnamese were made refugees by the time the Paris peace agreement was signed in early 1973.

Such results were not an accidental by-product of the war. Confronted with a popularly-based nationalist and revolutionary movement, the U.S. relied on overwhelming force used against the very people it was claiming to defend. Attacking the civilian population became the U.S. strategy for winning the war.

Against North Vietnam, bombing was

throughout the country.

Some of the basic policies of the new government were outlined in a proclamation issued soon after the takeover of Saigon. The proclamation guarantees democratic freedoms, equality of the sexes, freedom of religion, and equality of ethnic groups. It outlaws reprisals, and says that people should continue a normal life, maintain law and order, and support the revolution. The new government says it will care for orphans and the aged, and that it will aid farmers in restoring agricultural production.

On May 1, PRG representative in Paris Dinh Ba Thi told reporters that the new government would follow a foreign policy of "peace and non-alignment." He said South Vietnam is ready to "establish relations with all countries irrespective of their social systems on the basis of mutual respect for independence and sovereignty."

used in the hope of breaking the will of the civilian population to support the fighting in the south. Targets of U.S. air raids included hospitals like Bach Mai in Hanoi, schools, villages, the dike system, and even the cities of Hanoi and Haiphong.

In South Vietnam, the goal of the bombing was to isolate the PRG fighters from their supporters, the peasants, by forcibly relocating the population into "strategic hamlets" or creating a mass exodus to the cities away from the bombing and shelling. By the mid-60s, "forced "urbanization" had become the U.S. pacification strategy. The U.S. answer to people's war, as critic Noam Chomsky put it, was to eliminate the people.

Even the land itself became a target, because it produced the food that fed the guerrillas. According to Sen. Gaylord Nelson, 80 percent of South Vietnam's timber forests and over 10 percent of the cultivated land was destroyed through bombing and defoliation. In February 1974, the National Academy of Sciences in Washington concluded that the use of



North Vietnamese victim of CBU pellet bomb

On May 4, the command of the PRG's People's Liberation Armed Forces released a communique describing the final days that led to the PRG victory in Saigon. The campaign to take the capital, called the "Ho Chi Minh Campaign," began after the northern part of the country fell to the PRG in a period of three weeks in March. "Prompted by this great opportunity," the PRG said, "our armed forces and people put in motion an historic campaign, named after the great president Ho Chi Minh, to crush whatever remained of the enemy's military forces and coercive machinery, and liberate the city of Saigon, Gia Dinh and the rest of the territory of our beloved South Vietnam."

During those final hectic days, the PRG made sweeping military advances around Saigon, which were overshadowed in the press by reports of the political maneuvering in Saigon and the sudden evacuation of U.S. personnel. According

chemical herbicides caused damage to the ecology of South Vietnam that may take at least a century to heal.

The U.S. developed and used widely special anti-personnel weapons, designed to inflict a larger number of casualties than was possible with conventional bombs. Cluster bomb units, or CBUs, often dropped by B-52s from 50,000 feet, were designed to wound rather than kill, placing a greater burden on the medical resources of North Vietnam and the PRG. The CBUs contained small bombs, each of which exploded spewing out hundreds of small steel pellets. Later the steel pellets were replaced by hard plastic, impossible to locate in the body by X-rays. Other anti-personnel bombs sent out tiny arrows which embedded themselves in the flesh, or lay on trails until an unsuspecting victim walked by, tripping a tiny thread and often losing a foot.

Pacification of the civilian population of South Vietnam also included ground operations like the famous My Lai massacre—or like operation "Speedy Express," carried out in the Mekong Delta province of Ben Tre in 1968. According to *Newsweek* magazine, nearly 11,000 people were killed in that one province alone during the six-month operation. One helicopter unit involved in "Speedy Express" painted their unit headquarters with the slogan: "Death is our business and business is good."

Another side of the pacification program was Project Phoenix, designed by the CIA to eliminate suspected "enemy civilians." Between August 1968 and mid-1971, Phoenix agents killed 40,944 civilians, according to a report issued by the Thieu regime.

to the PRG's communiqué, on the single night of April 28, PRG forces launched simultaneous assaults, "taking the military complex at Bien Hoa, the Long Thanh base, the harbor at Vung Tau, the big base at Cu Chi" several other bases, and the provincial capital of Tan An and the headquarters of the Saigon Third Division. The way was then cleared for the PRG and North Vietnamese troops to enter Saigon on April 30, following Pres. Minh's surrender announcement.

Minh and other members of the short-lived government were released several days later. In an interview broadcast over Radio Hanoi, Minh said: "The Saigon military forces were no longer in a position to offer resistance. We knew the strength of the revolutionary government and the liberation army. The tank units were really formidable. In these circumstances, to surrender unconditionally was the only possible decision."

THE U.S. IN VIETNAM

The Thirty Years War

U.S. involvement in Vietnam which ended officially with the evacuation of U.S. personnel just hours before the PRG took power April 30 began 30 years ago. The following is a brief history of that involvement:

- 1945-50 France agrees in 1946 to recognize the Viet Minh's Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) which had taken power the previous fall after Japan surrendered at the end of World War II, but then sabotages the agreements with the DRV and launches the first Indochina War. The U.S. drops the OSS contact with the Viet Minh resistance made during WW II and backs the French attempt to retake their former colony.
- 1950-54 Following the communist victory in China and outbreak of war in Korea, securing Western control of Vietnam becomes a high priority in Washington. The first U.S. military aid and advisers are sent to Vietnam in July 1950. By 1954, the U.S. is paying over 70% of the French war effort. But France is defeated at Dien Bien Phu May 7, and signs the Geneva Agreements in July. The U.S. prepares to pick up where France left off, installing Ngo Dinh Diem as Premier of the French puppet government in Saigon. The National Security Council in August views the Geneva accords as a "disaster," and outlines a program of subversion against the DRV in the north and of military aid in violation of the accords to build up a pro-U.S. regime in the south.
- 1955-60 Diem, with U.S. aid and advisors, launches a campaign of terror against former Viet Minh resistance fighters, killing at least 75,000. With U.S. backing, Diem refuses to hold 1956 elections. Faced with the threat of extermination, Diem's opponents begin armed resistance in 1959, and organize the National Liberation Front in December 1960.
- 1961-68 Attempting to reverse a deteriorating situation in 1961, Pres. Kennedy adopts a strategy of "special war"—a U.S. advisory buildup and creation of strategic hamlets to "win the hearts and minds" of the people. The situation continues to worsen, and by summer 1963, Kennedy views Diem's refusal to reform his government as an obstacle to victory and orders Diem's ouster. Diem is assassinated November 1. Following Kennedy's death, Johnson reaffirms the U.S. commitment to the Saigon regime. By 1964, "special war" has failed and the NLF controls most of the countryside. Johnson uses Gulf of Tonkin incident in August 1964 to obtain wide war powers from



Vice-President Nixon inspects French front lines in North Vietnam, fall 1953

Congress. In 1965, the U.S. adopts a new strategy of direct intervention. Johnson begins round-the-clock bombing of DRV in March, and in July begins a U.S. land war in Asia, sending half a million U.S. troops to Vietnam by 1968. January 31, 1968, the NLF launches the Tet Offensive, taking over 100 major cities. The attacks are beaten back but the U.S. suffers decisive political defeat and failure of Johnson's war strategy. March 31, Johnson announces his decision not to run for re-election and to order a partial bombing halt of the DRV. In October, Johnson

agrees to DRV demand for total and unconditional bombing halt of DRV as precondition to peace talks.

- 1969-75 Nixon takes office in January 1969 with "secret plan to end the war." But instead of seeking a compromise settlement, Nixon seeks to prolong the war through the final U.S. Vietnam strategy, "Vietnamization." Nixon begins slow pullout of U.S. ground troops in June, while beginning massive program to build up Saigon armed forces. His strategy also secretly includes plans for escalation, leading to: the secret bombing of Cambodia in 1969; the Cambodian invasion, May 1970; the Son Tay POW camp raid in DRV, November 1970; the Lao invasion, February 1971; the resumption of bombing of the North and mining and blockade of DRV ports, April-May 1972; and the bombing of Hanoi, December 1972. The escalations fail, and PRG spring 1972 offensive forces Nixon to sign compromise peace agreement in Paris, January 27, 1973. Nixon secretly assures Thieu that U.S. will retaliate militarily if DRV launches a new offensive. August 15, 1973, Congressional ban on further U.S. military intervention in Indochina goes into effect. Nixon and then Ford refuse to pressure Thieu to implement the political provisions of the Paris agreement, leading to the final debacle when the PRG launches offensive in March 1975. The war ends with total U.S. defeat on April 30 when the entire Saigon armed forces and administration collapses and PRG takes power in Saigon.

WHO WAS THE AGGRESSOR IN VIETNAM?

Washington has had various explanations for the importance of U.S. involvement in Indochina, ranging from stopping the spread of communism and preventing the fall of Asian dominoes to securing tin and tungsten in Southeast Asia for American business and saving U.S. honor and prestige throughout the world. While these explanations have varied at different times or have been interwoven into a compelling collage for the U.S. Congress and public to support an endlessly escalating U.S. presence in Indochina, there has been one consistent argument justifying U.S. intervention: the U.S. was intervening to protect a sovereign nation, South Vietnam, and its legal government, the Republic of Vietnam, from foreign aggression by North Vietnam. Pres. Lyndon Johnson, in April 1965, claimed that "the first reality is that North Vietnam has attacked the independent nation of South Vietnam." And seven years later, Pres. Richard Nixon accused North Vietnam of "naked and unprovoked aggression across an international boundary."

This claim of North Vietnamese aggression has been the legal basis for the entire U.S. war effort in Vietnam. Yet the Pentagon's own secret study of U.S. Vietnam policy, the *Pentagon Papers*, supports the

position of North Vietnam and the PRG that it is the U.S. which has been guilty of aggression in Vietnam.

"South Vietnam," the authors of the *Pentagon Papers* concluded, "was essentially the creation of the United States." The *Papers* acknowledge that the U.S. ignored or subverted the 1954 Geneva Agreements, which recognized that the division of Vietnam into northern and southern zones was to be only a temporary and not a political boundary defining two separate states.

The *Pentagon* study shows that the U.S. policymakers were well aware that under the Geneva Accords, the Saigon regime was only an interim administration, and that the country was to be reunified under one government following free elections to be held by July 1956. The *Papers* also show that the U.S. knew that free elections would have been won by Ho Chi Minh, and would have led to reunification of Vietnam under Ho's Democratic Republic of Vietnam. And the secret study records that Washington conspired with the Diem regime in Saigon to prevent this by refusing to hold the elections and instead trying to establish the "Republic of Vietnam" as the government of an independent South Vietnam.

internews roundup internews roundup

"TILTING TOWARD THE ARABS?"

Secretary of State Henry Kissinger emerged from a May 7 closed-door session of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee **mideast** on the situation in the Middle East to tell reporters, "We are definitely not tilting toward the Arabs." Kissinger's denial of a U.S. policy shift followed a State Department announcement the day before that the U.S. would sell a sophisticated air defense system of Hawk missiles to Jordan—when Washington had frozen new arms commitments to Israel.

The arms deal with Jordan's pro-U.S. King Hussein comes at a time of increasing Arab-Israeli tension and risks of renewed war, according to sources on both sides of the conflict. The independent Jordanian newspaper *Al Dastour* reported May 5 that Israel is massing troops and armor along the entire Syrian and Jordanian cease-fire lines. Citing Arabs who had just crossed from the West Bank into Jordan, the paper charged that the build-up included tank columns and missile batteries and that thousands of Israeli reservists had been recalled to active duty.

At the same time, Israeli Defense Minister Shimon Peres claimed that the Egyptian army has prepared the terrain and fortifications necessary to deploy forces headed eastward across the Suez Canal into the Sinai Peninsula. Peres further charged that Egypt had strengthened its arsenal dramatically with MIG-23 fighters, ground-to-air missiles and anti-tank missiles from the Soviet Union and Mirage fighter planes from France.

On the diplomatic front, Palestine Liberation Organization president Yasser Arafat left Moscow May 5 after a week-long visit. A Soviet communiqué published in *Pravda* called for resumption of the Geneva talks and supported the creation of a Palestinian state. In Washington, the White House announced that President Ford will meet with Israel's Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on June 11 and 12, ten days after scheduled talks in Austria between Ford and Egyptian President Sadat.

MACHEL PREDICTS COLLAPSE OF WHITE RULE

Rhodesia's white-minority regime will not live long after Mozambique becomes independent next month, according to Samora Machel, the head of FRELIMO (Mozambique Liberation Front). **rhodesia**

Machel is expected to be the first president of Mozambique when the former Portuguese colony becomes independent on June 25. Machel told a rally in Lindi, Tanzania, on May 7, "our victory in Mozambique makes it necessary for us to state openly

that the problem of Rhodesia will be solved in no time."

Machel's prediction carries special weight because 80% of Rhodesia's trade now passes through Mozambique to ports on the Indian Ocean. If the new FRELIMO government upholds the United Nations sanctions against Rhodesia, as is expected, the white-minority regime of Premier Ian Smith will be in deep trouble. Mozambique has been encouraged to join the embargo and sever Rhodesia's trade arteries by the decision May 6 of the 33-nation British Commonwealth to compensate Mozambique for the revenues it will lose by cutting trade with Rhodesia.

The day after the Commonwealth decision, Bishop Abel Muzorewa, the president of Rhodesia's African National Council, told reporters at the United Nations that the Smith regime is currently under such pressure that it will probably quickly consent to majority rule. The bishop warned, however, that if the Smith regime did not agree to a rapid transfer of power to the African majority, the ANC will intensify its armed campaign.

SPRING LABOR OFFENSIVE HITS RAILWAYS

Japan's Spring Labor Offensive or Shunto hit full stride May 7 with the start of a 4-day campaign of nationwide slowdowns **japan** and strikes that seeks to paralyze the country's railways. The annual labor offensive, led by the Joint Struggle Committee which represents some 8.5 million workers, is aimed at winning wage increases above the 15% guideline set by the government and private corporations. Organized labor rejected the proposed 15% limit, arguing that it would prevent workers from earning enough to keep pace with inflation. Last year consumer prices rose about 25% in Japan, although the rate has slowed down in 1975.

The 4-day strike wave began with job actions and walk-outs by railway workers, grounding 233 of 620 express trains and affecting an estimated 18 million passengers. The rail strikes are planned to build to an all-out shutdown of the nation's transportation system by May 10. The strike might strand Queen Elizabeth II and her husband Prince Philip in Tokyo on their state visit to Japan; they had been scheduled to take a ride on a special high-speed "bullet" train of the Japanese National Railways. Clerical, medical, industrial and postal workers are set to join the transportation strike.

Last year the Spring Labor Offensive won a dramatic 30% increase in wages. The Joint Struggle Committee says it will call a general strike if the current campaign does not force the government and private corporations to meet its wage demands.

KY NHAN—PHOTOGRAPHER FOR THE REVOLUTION

photo/John Spragens, Jr.

"People sometimes suspect me of being a secret police agent," said Ky Nhan, "because I'm not afraid of the police and get in close to the demonstrators." I knew him as the lean, close-cropped photographer for *Dien Tin*, Saigon's major opposition paper, which was closed down by the Thieu regime earlier this year. He was bursting, it seemed, to say more, but it was still 1974, and Thieu seemed still firmly in the saddle. People had to be cautious about their friendships.

Now I know what he had wanted to say. On liberation day, Ky Nhan walked into the office of the Associated Press in Ho Chi Minh City and told the surprised staffers, "I have been a revolutionary for ten years." To them he had been only one of the dozens of Vietnamese photo stringers whose pictures they bought for a small fee and a replacement roll of film.

Two months ago friends in Saigon reported that the police had beaten Ky Nhan severely

and taken his cameras. The cameras weren't worth a great deal. They were old, and the lenses were so scratched that his photographs always had a soft-focus effect. But they were his tools. It was good, a few weeks later, to catch a glimpse of him on the TV screen—in close, at a demonstration, with a camera in his hands again.

Like so many Vietnamese, Ky Nhan was a poet. His efforts were not so elegant as those of some other staffers on *Dien Tin*. But as they sat in a friend's house sharing poems with each other, the patriotism in his simple lines came through unmistakably.

It has taken decades, and the cost has been high, but the dedication and courage of millions of quiet, simple Vietnamese like Ky Nhan have been the "secret" of the success of Vietnam's revolution.

—John Spragens, Jr.

Six Weeks

(continued from page 1)

escalations to come if the PRG launched an offensive that threatened destruction of the Vietnamization program. These escalations included the secret bombing of Cambodia in 1969, the Cambodia invasion in 1970, and the Laos invasion of 1971. When the PRG did launch an offensive in spring 1972, Nixon responded by ordering the heaviest bombing of the war against North and South Vietnam, and took the unprecedented and dangerous step of mining and blockading North Vietnam's ports and harbors. Only the U.S. bombing prevented the complete collapse of the Saigon army.

Nixon was forced by the defeats of the 1972 offensive—including the clear indications to the war-weary U.S. electorate that the war could go on at a high and costly level indefinitely—to negotiate a peace agreement which granted North Vietnam and the PRG the basic principles they had always fought for while leaving Thieu in power, at least temporarily. The key provisions of the agreement were: the U.S. recognition that Vietnam was one country (and thus implicitly that the northern troops had a right to be in the south); recognition of two administrations—the PRG and Saigon—two armies and three political forces in South Vietnam; and guarantee of democratic liberties and self-determination through free elections for a new government in the south to be organized by a three-part National Council of Reconciliation and

Concord, composed of the PRG, Saigon and the Third Force. In his resignation speech, Thieu indicated he was always adamantly opposed to these provisions.

Nixon and Kissinger never pressed Thieu to implement the political provisions of the agreement, which they and he realized would have led to Thieu's demise and a coalition government beyond U.S. control—which was always considered a defeat by Washington. But they also knew, as predicted in 1969 by NSSM-1 and demonstrated by the 1972 offensive, that the Saigon army could not stand alone if the PRG became impatient with Thieu's intransigence and launched a new offensive. As a result, they believed that Thieu could be kept in power after a U.S. withdrawal under the Paris agreement only if the U.S. were prepared to resume the massive bombing of North Vietnam. Nixon and Kissinger considered the Christmas bombing of Hanoi a warning to North Vietnam of U.S. willingness to bomb again after the agreement was signed.

And in fact, Nixon and Kissinger were apparently planning to resume the bombing in April 1973 and were stopped only by Watergate revelations. At that time, there were firm indications that the administration was planning a new escalation. In the *International Bulletin's* predecessor, the *Indochina Bulletin*, we wrote in mid-April 1973 that there were indications the U.S. was planning resumption of the bombing of North Vietnam. These signs included: escalation of the bombing of Cambodia, new B-52 strikes in Laos, suspension of mine-clearing operations in North Vietnam, and resumption of reconnaissance flights over Hanoi and Haiphong. We cited the April 12 *New York Times* which said the administration was considering six options to meet the "crisis" in Indochina which it claimed was caused by a North Vietnamese buildup in South Vietnam. Those options included resumption of the mining and blockade of North Vietnamese ports and harbors, and heavy bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong. The next month we wrote that in the face of "public and Congressional opposition to the bombing of Cambodia and to the successively exploding Watergate bombshells [in late April], Nixon had to back down, temporarily shelving the plans for escalation."

This view was given unexpected confirmation last week by *Time* magazine. "In April 1973, less than three months after the Paris agreement was signed," *Time* wrote, "the Nixon Administration decided to end the truce by resuming U.S. bombing raids against North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces. . . . and possibly

against the North. The raids were to have been more intense than the Christmas 1972 bombings. After Nixon had given his final, formal approval to resume the bombing," *Time* says, "he learned that his counsel John Dean had begun to talk to the Watergate prosecutors. . . . Loath to deal with simultaneous severe criticism on two major fronts, he rescinded his approval of the raids."

Nixon's weakness from Watergate and a general Congressional abhorrence of the Cambodia bombing and abuse of executive authority, led Congress to ban all further U.S. military action in Indochina after August 15, 1973, depriving Nixon and then Ford of the legal power to carry out Nixon's promise to Thieu. Instead of pressing Thieu to seek a compromise political solution to the war in the new situation after August 15, 1973, however, Nixon and then Ford continued to support his intransigence.

When the PRG's patience finally evaporated, Thieu's fate was pre-ordained: as Kissinger had known from the beginning, the Vietnamization program was doomed to failure. The 30-year U.S. effort to maintain a Western foothold in Vietnam went down the drain in six weeks. Without the massive U.S. bombing promised by Nixon, the Saigon regime simply collapsed.


International Bulletin
 BOX 4400
 BERKELEY, CA. 94704

FIRST CLASS
 FIRST CLASS MAIL
 U.S. POSTAGE
 BERKELEY, CA.
 PERMIT No. 1239

THIS ISSUE: VIETNAM

PRG TAKEOVER	page 1
POLICY DEFEAT	page 1
U.S. INVESTMENT	page 2
REFUGEES	page 3
THE PRG	page 4
WAR CRIMES	page 5
HISTORY	page 6

The *International Bulletin* is published bi-weekly by Internews, an international news service. Subscriptions are \$4/six months, \$6/year, \$15/year overseas airmail, and \$12/year for institutions. Sustainers help support the *Bulletin* by pledging \$25-\$100/year. Internews also produces daily news reports available to radio stations. News for the *International Bulletin* is compiled from radio teletype sources around the world monitored by Internews and from U.S. and foreign press reports, as well as through independent investigation and research by our staff. All material copyright 1975 by Internews. Internews and the *International Bulletin* can be reached at (415) 845-7220 or P.O. Box 4400, Berkeley, CA. 94704. The staff of the *International Bulletin* includes: Jan Austin, Banning Garrett, Dan Mattson, Russ Stetler, Steve Talbot, Tracy Thompson, and Peter Truskier, Andy Truskier.